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MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

FURTHER INFORMATION

TOUCHING

AN ILLEGAL COMBINATION

OF

PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

AGAINST THE

PEACE AND SAFETY OF THE UNION,

AND A

MILITARY EXPEDITION PLANNED BY THEM

AGAINST THE

TERRITORIES OF A POWER

IN

AMITY WITH THE UNITED STATES;

WITH

THE MEASURES PURSUED

FOR

SUPPRESSING THE SAME.

JANUARY 26, 1807.

Read, and ordered to lie on the table.

CITY OF WASHINGTON:

A. & G. WAY, PRINTERS.

1807.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

I RECEIVED from general Wilkinson, on the twenty third instant, his affidavit, charging Samuel Swartwout, Peter V. Ogden, and James Alexander, with the crimes described in the affidavit, a copy of which is now communicated to both Houses of Congress.

It was announced to me at the same time, that Swartwout and Bollman, two of the persons apprehended by him, were arrived in this city, in custody each of a military officer. I immediately delivered to the attorney of the United States, in this district, the evidence received against them, with instructions to lay the same before the judges, and apply for their process to bring the accused to justice, and I put into his hands orders to the officers having them in custody, to deliver them to the marshal on his application.

TH: JEFFERSON,

January 26, 1807.

I, James Wilkinson, brigadier general and commander in chief of the army of the United States, to warrant the arrest of Samuel Swartwout, James Alexander, esquire, and Peter V. Ogden, on a charge of treason, misprision of *treason*, or such other offence against the government and laws of the United States, as the following facts may legally charge them with, on the honor of a soldier, and on the holy evangelists of Almighty God, do declare and swear, that in the beginning of the month of October last, when in command at Natchitoches, a stranger was introduced to me by colonel Cushing, by the name of Swartwout, who a few minutes after the colonel retired from the room, slipt into my hand a letter of formal introduction from colonel Burr, of which the following is a correct copy :

"PHILADELPHIA, 25*th July*, 1806.

"DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Swartwout, the brother of colonel S. of New York, being on his way down the Mississippi, and presuming that he may pass you at some post on the river, has requested of me a letter of introduction which I give with pleasure, as he is a most amiable young man, and highly respectable from his character and connections. I pray you to afford him any friendly offices which his situation may require, and beg you to pardon the trouble which this may give you.

With entire respect,
Your friend and obedient servant,
(Signed) A. BURR."

His excellency general WILKINSON.

Together with a packet which he informed me he was charged by the same person, to deliver me in private. This packet contained a letter in cypher from colonel Burr, of which the following is substantially as fair an interpretation as I have heretofore been able

to make, the original of which I hold in my possession:

"I, Aaron Burr, have obtained funds and have actually commenced the enterprize. Detachments from different points and under different pretences will rendezvous on the Ohio, 1st November. Every thing internal and external favors views: protection of England is secured: T—— is going to Jamaica, to arrange with the admiral on that station; it will meet on the Mississippi—England——Navy of the United States are ready to join, and final orders are given to my friends and followers: It will be an host of choice spirits. Wilkinson shall be second to *Burr* only: Wilkinson shall dictate the rank and promotion of his officers. *Burr* will proceed westward 1st August, never to return; with him go his daughter; the husband will follow in October, with a corps of *worthies*.

"Send forthwith an intelligent and confidential friend with whom Burr may confer; he shall return immediately with further interesting details: this is essential to concert and harmony of movement: send a list of all persons known to *Wilkinson*, west of the mountains, who may be useful, with a note delineating their characters. By your messenger send me 4 or 5 of the commissions of your officers, which you can borrow under any pretence you please; they shall be returned faithfully. Already are orders to the contractor given to forward six months provisions to points Wilkinson may name: this shall not be used until the last moment, and then under proper injunctions: the project is brought to the point so long desired: Burr guarantees the result with his life and honor; with the lives, the honor and fortunes of hundreds, the best blood of our country. Burr's plan of operations is to move down rapidly from the falls on the 15th of November, with the first 500 or 1,000 men, in light boats now constructing for that purpose, to be at Natchez between the 5th and 15th of December; there to meet Wilkinson; there to de-

termine whether it will be expedient in the first instance to seize on or pass by Baton Rouge: on receipt of this, send Burr an answer; draw on Burr for all expenses, &c. The people of the country to which we are going are prepared to receive us: their agents now with Burr say, that if we will protect their religion, and will not subject them to a foreign power, that in three weeks all will be settled. The Gods invite to glory and fortune: it remains to be seen whether we deserve the boon: the bearer of this goes express to you; he will hand a formal letter of introduction to you from Burr: he is a man of inviolable honor and perfect discretion; formed to execute rather than to project; capable of relating facts with fidelity, and incapable of relating them otherwise: he is thoroughly informed of the plans and intentions of and will disclose to you as far as you inquire, and no further: he has imbibed a reverence for your character, and may be embarrassed in your presence; put him at ease and he will satisfy you."

"*29th July.*"

I instantly resolved to avail myself of the reference made to the bearer, and in the course of some days drew from him (the said Swartwout) the following disclosure. "That he had been dispatched by col. Burr from Philadelphia, had passed through the states of Ohio and Kentucky, and proceeded from Louisville for St. Louis, where he expected to find me, but discovering at Kaskaskias that I had descended the river, he procured a skiff, hired hands and followed me down the Mississippi to Fort Adams, and from thence set out for Natchitoches, in company with captains Sparks and Hooke, under the pretence of a disposition to take part in the campaign against the Spaniards, then depending. That col. Burr, with the support of a powerful association, extending from New York to New Orleans, was levying an armed body of

7000 men from the state of New York and the western states and territories, with a view to carry an expedition against the Mexican provinces, and that 500 men under col. Swartwout and a col. or major Tyler, were to descend the Allegany, for whose accommodation light boats had been built and were ready." I inquired what would be their course; he said, "this territory would be revolutionized, where the people were ready to join them, and that there would be some seizing, he supposed, at New Orleans; that they expected to be ready to embark about the first of February, and intended to land at Vera Cruz, and to march from thence to Mexico." I observed that there were several millions of dollars in the bank of this place; to which he replied, "We know it full well;" and on my remarking that they certainly did not mean to violate private property, he said they "merely meant to borrow, and would return it; that they must equip themselves in New Orleans; that they expected naval protection from Great Britain; that the capt.—— and the officers of our navy were so disgusted with the government that they were ready to join; that similar disgusts prevailed throughout the western country, where the people were zealous in favor of the enterprize, and that pilot boat built schooners were contracted for along our southern coast for their service; that he had been accompanied from the falls of Ohio to Kaskaskias, and from thence to Fort Adams, by a Mr. Ogden, who had proceeded on to New Orleans with letters from colonel Burr to his friends there." Swartwout asked me whether I had heard from doctor Bollman; and on my answering in the negative, he expressed great surprize, and observed, "That the doctor and a Mr. Alexander had left Philadelphia before him, with dispatches for me, and that they were to proceed by sea to New Orleans, where he said they must have arrived."

Though determined to deceive him if possible, I could not refrain telling Mr. Swartwout it was im-

possible that I could ever dishonor my commission; and I believe I duped him by my admiration of the plan, and by observing, "That although I could not join in the expedition, the engagements which the Spaniards had prepared for me in my front, might prevent my opposing it:" Yet I did the moment I had deciphered the letter, put it into the hands of col. Cushing, my adjutant and inspector, making the declaration that I should oppose the lawless enterprize with my utmost force. Mr. Swartwout informed me he was under engagements to meet col. Burr at Nashville the 20th of November, and requested of me to write him, which I declined; and on his leaving Natchitoches about the 18th of October, I immediately employed lieut. T. A. Smith to convey the information, in substance, to the President, without the commitment of names; for from the extraordinary nature of the project, and the more extraordinary appeal to me, I could but doubt its reality, notwithstanding the testimony before me, and I did not attach solid belief to Mr. Swartwout's reports respecting their intentions on this territory and city, until I received confirmatory advice from St. Louis.

After my return from the Sabine, I crossed the country to Natchez, and on my descent of the Mississippi from that place, I found Swartwout and Peter V. Ogden at fort Adams: with the latter I held no communication, but was informed by Swartwout, that he, Ogden, had returned so far from New Orleans, on his route to Tennessee, but had been so much alarmed by certain reports in circulation that he was afraid to proceed. I inquired whether he bore letters with him from New Orleans, and was informed by Swartwout that he did not, but that a Mr. Spence had been sent from New Orleans through the country to Nashville, with letters for colonel Burr.

I reached this city the 25th ultimo, and on the next morning James Alexander, esq. visited me: he enquired of me aside whether I had seen doctor Bollman,

and on my answering in the negative, he asked me whether I would suffer him to conduct Bollman to me, which I refused. He appeared desirous to communicate something, but I felt no inclination to inculpate this young man, and he left me. A few days after he paid me a second visit, and seemed desirous to communicate, which I avoided, until he had risen to take leave; I then raised my finger, and observed, "Take care, you are playing a dangerous game." He answered, "It will succeed." I again observed, "Take care;" and he replied with a strong affirmation, "Burr will be here by the beginning of next month." In addition to these corroborating circumstances against Alexander, I beg leave to refer to the accompanying documents, A, B. From all which I feel no hesitation in declaring, under the solemn obligation of an oath, that I do believe the said Swartwout, Alexander and Ogden have been parties to, and have been concerned in the insurrection formed or forming in the states and territories on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, against the laws and constitution of the United States.

(Signed) JAMES WILKINSON.

Sworn to, and subscribed before me, this 26th day of December, in the year of our Lord 1806.

(Signed) GEORGE POLLOCK,
Justice of the peace. for the county of Orleans.

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